

The Writing Class



The Writing Class
Jincy Willett
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I found this novel difficult to get into, because I made up my mind half-way through the first page that I didn't like the style. It would have been a big mistake, had I given up then – the first few pages are someone's diary entry and the narrative begins on page five.

This is an intriguing mystery story, bordering on the thriller. It is not clear until almost at the end, what is going on. The author uses a creative writing class to bring her disparate characters together and give them life. All of them turn out to be far from perfect people and they have each come to this class for different and personal reasons.

In the process of unwinding the central theme of the story, Jincy Willett manages to explore themes around writing: questions of style, motivation, expression, frustration, use of grammar and form. She teaches creative writing herself and this is obvious in her painting of the characters, including that of Amy Gallup, the teacher of this fictional class.

Jincy Willett manages to weave a growing mystery around the central mystery itself, so that we are not sure, until a long way into the novel, whether there really is anything untoward going on or whether it is a figment of some characters' overactive imaginations.

There were only a few places in the novel where I felt the pace slackened unnecessarily through what felt to me as very American humour. But then, this *is* an American novel, set in Southern California and American readers may well react differently.

I found the book a lot of fun to read and experienced increasing reluctance to put it down. It is very clever in the development of many of the characters and in turning what should have been a run-of-the-mill writing class into a possible murder mystery.

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